

# Character Builder 您好嗎？

The basic unit of the Chinese language is the *zi* (字), i.e. a Chinese word. Each *zi* has a written form (called a character, made up of strokes), a sound (made up of consonant and vowel) and a meaning (or multiple meanings). When we speak or write Chinese, we string *zi* together to form terms, phrases and sentences.

In Putonghua (the spoken form of Modern Standard Chinese) each *zi* is pronounced in one of four tones:

1<sup>st</sup> tone: 1 = diacritical mark — pitch: 5 to 5, highest prolonged

2<sup>nd</sup> tone: 2 = diacritical mark / pitch: 3 to 5, middle to high

3<sup>rd</sup> tone: 3 = diacritical mark U pitch: 2 to 1 to 4, low to lowest to high

4<sup>th</sup> tone: 4 = diacritical mark \ pitch: 5 to 1, highest to lowest)

To pronounce each *zi* below, follow its pinyin and the given tone number. Light-sound words, which have no definite pitch, carry no diacritical mark and are marked by 0.

## This week: Words about flooding



Putonghua pronunciation: *jiang1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *gong1*

Meanings: big river

江 = 河流 (*he2 liu2* = river~flow) = river, e.g. China's 黃河 (*Huang2 He2* = Yellow-River), 長江 (*Chang2 Jiang1* = Long-River, also called 揚子江 = *Yang2 Zi3 Jiang1* = Yangtze Kiang), 珠江 (*Zhu1 Jiang1* = Pearl-River).

江水 (*jiang1 shui3* = river-water) carrying 淤泥 (*yu1 ni2* = sludge/sediment~mud = silt) forms 三角洲 (*san1 jiao3 zhou1* = three~corners-island/continent = river delta). 長三角 (*Chang2 san1 jiao3* = Yangtze~three~corners = Yangtze Delta) and 珠三角 (*Zhu1 san1 jiao3* = Pearl~three~corners = Pearl River Delta) are highly industrialized regions.

Heroes 打江山 (*da3 jiang1 shan1* = fight-rivers~mountains = work/fight hard to establish nation/enterprise/influence). National anthem praises country's 大好河山 (*da4 hao3 he2 shan1* = great~good~rivers~mountains = beautiful terrain/domain).

by Diana Yue